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THE SIEGE OF CARTHAGE

THE SIEGE





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THE SIEGE OF CARTHAGE

(An Pistorical Cyisode),

AND OTHER POEMS.

ΒY

S. H. SLEIGH.



London:

REMINGTON AND CO.,
133, New Bond Street, W.

1880.

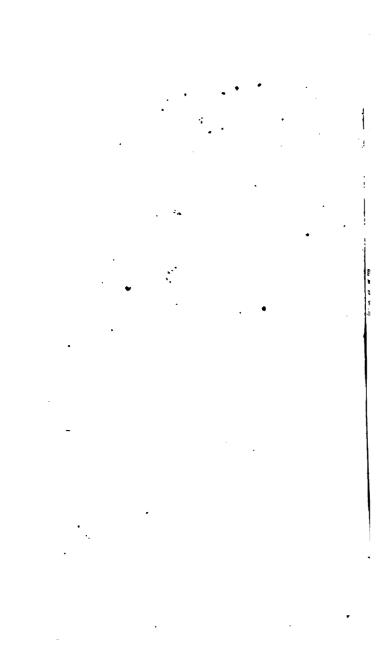
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IN MEMORIAM.

Within the hallowed fane of Brasenose. An In Memoriam mural tablet stands, Upreared by friendly hearts, and willing hands. Yet, little do the classic words disclose Beyond the incident recorded there Of him, whose life had proved so passing fair. But oh, unconscious brass! couldst thou reveal A tithe of what thy silence doth conceal, The careless gaze would hardly wander by, Nor leave behind a passing sympathy. An only son, the dearest, and the best; A father's life, o'ershadowed, and unblest; A mother's broken heart—tho' now at rest; A peaceful English home, enriched with all That made glad life a loving carnival. Oh cold, insensate brass! couldst thou confess, Such were the burden of thy bitterness.



THE SIEGE OF CARTHAGE:

AN HISTORICAL EPISODE.

"Amongst the number of those who perished in the conflagration was the wife of Asdrubal, the Cathaginian commander, who had meanly surrendered to the Romans. After untering the most bitter imprecations against her husband, whom she saw standing below, she stabbed her two children and then leaped into the flames."

Rom. Hist.

Carthage, thy race is done!

The ruthless flames sweep on

O'er temple, shrine, and tower;

And Roman pride and Roman hate,

With all its universal power,

Have left thee crushed and desolate.

Wreck upon wreck, destruction rears

Her banner o'er the boast of years:

One burning mass the conqueror sees;

A nation's glories strew the breeze.

Aghast the hardy veteran stood
As onward swept the fiery flood;
And as with oft recurring thought
He pictured Carthage in her might,
His generous spirit half forgot

The savage triumph of the fight.

Ah! can one softer feeling plant

An impress on such adamant?

Can pity in that spirit dwell,

Whose only object sought to quell?

Yes, Carthage, like a noble foe,

The Roman weeps thy overthrow.

"Gods of Olympus! can it be
The shade of injured Liberty
That dares with such majestic tread,
Unawed by ought of human dread,"
Amidst the dying and the dead?
With thrilling awe each warrior's gaze
Is fixed upon that lurid blaze;

And as the dark mass sweeps away Each heart throbs back a quicker play; For imaged through the burning air A woman's form is standing there: Yet not alone, for in her arms Two infants cling with dread alarms; And ever and anon their cries Of terror-wakened agonies Burst wildly on the mother's ear; Who heeds them not, for though a tear O'erleaps that angry eye, it flows The offspring of her country's woes; For all maternal sense is lost In what absorbs her being most; Whilst with a patriot's bitter pride She sees destruction's rapid stride, As battlements defenceless bend. And thrones, where kings were wont to sway, As swift as Alpine snows descend, And pass like morning clouds away.

Her country !-- oh! it cannot be That yonder reckless anarchy Tells where her boasted Carthage lies, Reeking beneath those very skies Whose glorious hues so oft had given To tower and shrine a look of heaven, When with their proud, imperial heights They caught the last, but fairest lights! Her country!—yes, the free, the brave, Betrayed and lost by yonder slave; And him !--oh, what a thought is that! The object of her maiden choice, The chosen of a nation's voice, The hand of scorn is pointing at. Her country !—yes, where is it now? Is all the past a barren show? What memory is Thrasymene, And Cannæ hath it ever been? What future Hannibal shall swear Upon those perished altars there

A vengeance which shall know no rest
Till the oppressor is opprest?
The gallant trophies of renown
In each succeeding conquest won,
The cherished forms of household ties,
Her temples and her deities—
All, all are lost, with none to tell,
Save history's page, how helpless fell
Carthage, the once invincible.

Fearless she stood, with daring mien,
Like some pale rock in ocean seen
When the wild billows toss below,
And threaten instant overflow.
So strangely calm, the outward form
Gave not a sign of inward storm,
Save where, beneath the troubled brow,
The veins in rigid furrows show,
As though the very heart were riven;
Like waters, in their wilder moods,

When by the icy tempest driven,

They stand transfixed in chiselled floods;

And, but for each successive thrill

That o'er the trembling lip would steal,

And passion's conquered self reveal,

No Parian marble looked more still.

Quick as the summer lightning's play
Bursts through the gathered thunder-cloud,
Without a moment's seeming stay,
Her glance swept o'er that arm'd-clad crowd.
Why shrinks a warrior 'neath that eye?
What! can a woman's scrutiny
Whiten the cheek, unnerve the might,
That should not fail in fiercest fight?
No, 'tis the shame which recreants prove
When honour's daring path they flee;
And, fearing death for what they love,
Cling to a life of infamy:
Who never knew, who cannot feel

Those impulses which lead men on To grapple with a foeman's steel, And win a grave or wear a crown. In all man's catalogue of crime What darker record shadows time Than his who, for some selfish aims, Betrays his trusting country's claims, And flies, to save a worthless life, Her glorious martyrdom of strife? What obloquy shall round him cling, Embittered by that inward sting Which makes a hell of suffering; Whilst every desecrated stone That impious hands have overthrown, And prayers which patriots' lips have said, And blood which noble hearts have bled, The matron's wail, the maiden's tear; The helpless cry of childhood's fear, With all that utterance cannot name, A very avalanche of shame,

With gathering force shall onward roll, And, curse-like, crush the traitor's soul.

But hark, that voice!—soft and clear,
Its tones fell o'er each wondering ear;
And every warrior started there,
As though some spirit winged the air,
So thrillingly those accents fell
From lips that seemed more suited far
Love's gentler impulses to tell
Than echo through those ranks of war
The bitterness of scorn and hate,
Whose lava burnings overleap
All that the heart doth consecrate;
And in their wild, impetuous sweep
Leave naught behind that life would keep.

"Hence, recreant! hence, thou worthless one!
Whom Carthage once could claim her son.
Can blood of ancient heroes path
A soul which such vile issues hath?

Oh! would that it had ceased to flow Ere giving life to such as thou; Or better had its pure stream left The channel of its parent race, And some mean peasant's fissure cleft, Than wanton in a heart so base. Thy trusting country gave the sway Of noble daring to thy sword; And warriors listened to thy word, Deeming it glory to obey; And thou art there;—but where are they? And I believed that serpent tongue, For woman's heart is weak at best; And love can never picture wrong, The bright ideal once confessed; For should a passing doubt arise, And spread a cloud o'er scenes so fair, The altar's flame would cease to rise, Leaving the lifeless embers there. What darker destiny was mine,

To worship at so base a shrine, And with such fond affection cling As though the idol were divine? Why did I love so vile a thing? Hence maiden toy! this woman's heart Scorns thy unstable offering, And yields to hate each weaker part. Cast from those limbs the polished mail, Whose glittering steel no tarnish knows; Lest its rude clang should make thee pale Before the laughter of thy foes. Dash from thy brow that warlike plume, Its very feathers droop for shame; Henceforth thy hand shall guide the loom, And distaff honours win thee fame. Would that the breasts, which gave thee life, Had nourished thee with tiger's blood; And then perchance the love of strife, Had marred thy spirit's womanhood; And made thee like that baser herd.

Who heedless brave war's fiercest tide; The hireling's pay their battle word, The robber's zeal their noblest pride. Behold these children! they are thine; Their trembling limbs bespeak their sire; Yet they no Roman slaves shall pine; For midst this desolating fire, Mother and babes alike shall fall, And one destruction sweep o'er all. Oh! had I known when on this breast, Whose throbbings cradled thee to rest, How base a heart was pillowed there, Thou shoulds thave proved what hate can dare, When love is driven to despair; Traitor! that sleep had been thy last, And I had never mourned the past. Was thine the spirit that unfurled Yon banner to a conquered world, And o'er each Alpine pathless height, Led Punic chieftains to the fight;

When Nature yielded to their will, Attesting Hannibal thy skill; As through those gaping granite rents, Each army passed in warlike train, And Rome beheld the victor's tents. Crowding her fields like shocks of grain; Till the proud eagle's haughty crest, Cowered within her Tiber's nest? Thine coward! who didst bend the knee, In supplicating terror low, Before thy fallen country's foe, Yet for that country made no plea; But like the abject thing thou art, The scorn of man, condemned by Heaven, Not e'en thy children formed a part; For self alone that prayer was given. Live wretched one! but thou shalt feel A deeper wound than Roman steel Could e'er inflict, thy spirit haunt: And, oh, how oft the bitter taunt

Of heedless lips will meet thine ear; Till thou shalt blush to own the fear That gave up all that life holds dear. Ee'n childhood, with a lisping tongue, Shall find a byeword in thy wrong; And woman's heart, by nature made, To pity where she cannot aid, Shall, with a strange abhorring sense, Approve thy bitter recompense. Or midst the wide arena's plain, Perchance some proud patrician lord Will bid thee take thy arms again To combat with the captive horde. Hark to that shout! its wild delight Proclaims thee vanquished in the fight: Then in that hour of dark distress. With none to pity, none to bless, With what a bitter consciousness. Thy soul shall there concentred see The past, with all its infamy?

A future, even darker still, With an eternity of ill: And as thy life's blood flows in death Rome, with her execrating breath, Shall couple with thy worthless name, The obloquy of endless shame. Away, away !--why tarry here? Is it to shed a sorrowing tear Upon thy dying country's bier? The very ashes of thy sires, Which smoulder 'neath these burning fires, Polluted by so base a stain, Would hiss their curses back again. Can the weak yielding of those eyes Bid desolation leave her prize, Or Rome, repenting, build once more Another Carthage on this shore? What though they boasted ocean's source, And through eternity should course, They could not drown thine own remorse: No, recreant! no, the sword is thine! Let woman bow at pity's shrine: Her tear may claim acceptance there, But mercy scorns the coward's prayer. Souls of the mighty dead, awake! From monumental dust arise, And in the blood of Romans slake The wrath of Punic deities! Unsheathe the once victorious sword, 'Revenge!' alone your battle word; Nor cease the fight till conquest wave Her banner o'er the victor's grave; Then yonder setting sun shall see Carthage destroyed, but Carthage free. What! sleep ye still? Methinks the crash Of tower and temple as they fall Beneath that flame, whose glittering flash Seems dancing like a bachanal Amidst the ruins it has made, Would bring to life each warrior's shade.

But if it be the will of fate Her plains shall lie thus desolate— A record of the Roman's hate-What future vengeance shall be given? My country's gods, oh, answer me! Hath Carthage bowed in heresy, Or vainly sacrificed to Heaven? No; by her firstborn gift, that race Which perished in their god's embrace— The freewill offering of her young, Whose noble blood from heroes sprung— A recompense shall yet be ours: Behold the coming tempest lours; And Rome's proud city—though she dwells Throned on her seven hills' pinnacles, A conquered world her boasted claim— Shall prove, like Carthage, but a name."

She ceased, and in a moment's seeming That eye, so late with anger gleaming, Assumed a gentleness so deep, When gazing on her children's sleep, Who, wearied with their fears' dismay, Within her arms unconscious lay, And for a passing interval Affection triumphed over all. With what a passionate caress Her lips sweep o'er each infant face! And with what untold tenderness She folds them in that fond embrace! One long, last kiss—one long, last look— Then, with impulsive haste, she took A dagger from her girdled zone; A moment high aloft it shone, And flashed again the livid flame; Then plunged, with an unerring aim, Deep in each breast, and one lone cry Went surging thro' the shivering sky, As, leaping in the gulf beneath, The mother found a patriot's death.

AZIM AND HELA.

Pale as her waiting shroud, that fair form lay
In the last beauty of a first decay;
Whilst ever and anon a sunset hue
Would flush the cheek and brow then leave the blue

Delicate veins, so visibly tracing
Their brooklet channels o'er that snow-like facing;
And in that stillness, audibly beating,
The throbbing heart cast forth its flood, fleeting
Heavily, as the parched up summer's wave,
Whose streams the pebble's frontlet scarcely lave.
And now, as in the calm of torrid zone,
With scarce a warning bursts the dread cyclone;
So sweeps delirium o'er the burning brain,
As reason's yielding barriers part in twain.

Then each impulsive passion sways the breast,
Like tidal waters in the storm's unrest;
Whilst the large eyes where love was wont to glow
With hues no eastern skies could ever show,
Their soft effulgence gone, with frenzy glare,
As tho' some evil spirit lighted there.
And hark! how wildly from those pale lips,
fraught

With weird distractions, breaks each wandering thought;

With every feeling of the soul confess,
Unchecked by fears of maiden consciousness;
Until with sighs of long protracted breath
Exhausted nature sinks in seeming death.
It is an agonizing sight to see
That strife, which only knows one destiny;
To mark the conflict in its varying phase,
E'en tho' the watcher's be a friendless gaze:
But oh! to look upon a second self,
Where heart and soul have centred all their wealth;

To see that ebb and flow, whose fitful play
Leaves lessening sand-prints every passing day,
Till with a cruel certainty we prove
Our severed life hath lost its all of love.

So lay Arabia's daughter; o'er her bent
A form, whose every lineament
Developed such a sense of native grace,
No second look betrayed a doubtful race;
The daring mien, the self-reliant air,
The presence of the desert's child declare,
And he had left the battle field, where late
His fearless heart had scorned the fiercest hate;
But now that will, so dominant, is quelled,
As fear and hope alternate bondage held;
For narrowed to that life's uncertain ray
Are all the visions of his yesterday.

Silent he stood in anguish lone and deep;
Whilst springing from that hidden fount, whose sleep

Man seldom wakes, some starting tear

Would flood the trembling lid, then disappear

As the the haughty spirit would repress

All demonstration of its bitterness;

Oh! in that calm of seeming apathy,

When pride and passion strive for mastery,

There is a fearful aspect of repose,

Like the stilled quiet of the tempest's throes;

And, with a dread uncertainty, we fear

The waking of the storm which hovers near.

Behold it comes! and with a giant force

O'erwhelms each object that would stay its

course;

Whilst in that effort of resistless grief,
The maddening spirit finds its sole relief.
And now successive memories fondly trace
A past no future ever shall efface;
Again, those arms, with pressure soft and warm,

Cling, in despair, around his parting form;

Again, that heart throbs wildly on his breast;

Once more, those trembling lips their last have pressed;

Then, the impatient hand flings to each air The kisses which refuse to linger there.

Oh, woman! e'en tho' scoffing hearts proclaim

The worst of follies coupled with thy name;
Yet in thy fallen state 'twas thine to show
A love the Pharisee could never know;
And if such flame thy soiled soul could light,
What tongue shall tell its virgin infinite?
To one, so pure and true, this tribute's given—
The record of a love transferred to heaven.

But now her wandering soul again returns,
And reason's chastened ray more calmly burns;
Yet scarce her conscious eye, with dread amaze,
Had rested on that well remembered gaze;

Ere swept the blood across her burning cheek, And thus the lips in wondering accents speak.

"Is it a vision, or do I see The form of him who a spirit should be? Can the battle field restore its slain, Or the soul inhabit her clay again? Or hast thou past the deep, dark river, With thy mortal garb as fair as ever, Untainted, untouched, by the worm that must wither? Speak, dearest, speak! and tell me why Thou has left those realms of eternity? Is it to bear this being on, When the last deed of death is done, And onward guide its timid flight, To you far orbs, where, robed in light, They circle the throne of the Infinite? Oh, joy divine! what rapturous thought To fly where earthly ills are not;

To trace that Paradise unseen, Where Azrael's wing hath never been; Or wander by that halcyon shore, Where parting seas shall sound no more. Yes, Azim, there no war's alarms Shall snatch thee from these circling arms: Nor the blast of the martial trumpet rouse Thy spirit from its sweet repose; Nor bitter tears, nor fond hearts rending, Nor blighted hopes in sighs ascending, Nor pleasure's cup untasted fall, Or quaffed too deep the spirit pall; But joy, without one darker sense, To cloud or limit its intense Supremacy of happiness, Shall that eternal future bless. There will I prove, beyond those skies, A love which fate on earth denies — A love so pure, yet passionate, That e'en the burning soul of hate

Would pale beneath its sunlight fire, And in its own dark night expire. A love that, like a mighty river, Flows onwards in its course for ever; Which the cold world could ne'er enchain With all the winter of its feeling; Nor life's parched shores its waters wane, As homeward to their ocean stealing. A love—oh! thou canst never guess The height and depth of its excess: Its one sole, absolute control From that dear hour when first this soul Heard those confessing lips repeat Their homage at thy Hela's feet. Dost thou remember kneeling there, And with that sweet, impassioned prayer Claiming this heart, which was thine S awo

And when, with womanly pretence, I triumphed in thy soul's suspense, How thou didst plead, as though this cheek Had needed not the weak defence Of maiden modesty to speak A coldness it had never known? And couldst thou feel a moment's fear When, turning from that loving eye, I sought to hide joy's gushing tear,? Oh, long before thy thoughts did rear Affection's altar in this breast. The temple and the shrine confessed. As rose the incense of each sigh, The presence of love's deity. But thou art fading from my sight, And all around is growing night; Can this be death? or can it be The coinage of a weakened brain— Delirium's barren phantasy-To leave me desolate again? Oh, fearful thought! Stay, Azim, stay! The light of hope grows cold and grey;

And nature shrinks, without thy aid, To pass the unutterable shade."

"Cease, Hela, cease! what dream is this? What foe could dare that heart deceive? Hath cruel envy sought thee his, Feigning this life had ceased to live? Or didst thou, with a trusting ear, Give audience to each darker thought, Till love believed the lie of fear, And faith became a thing of naught? And, as the subtle, venomed draught The unsuspecting lips have quaffed, Thro' every vein pursues its way, Bearing a slow, but sure decay, So circled in thy soul despair, Dispelling each bright vision there. But now the dreaded past is done, And Azim claims thee for his own;

Unclose once more those eyes of thine, And answer back the love of mine. Thou dreaded immaterial sway! Intangible to mortal sense, Oh! pity human impotence, And turn that fatal glance away. Thy ravin is the battle-field, Where lies the soldier on his shield— The bloody plain where, heap on heap, The fiercest foes like brothers sleep-The maniac, writhing in his cell, The wretch whom hope hath bade farewell— The withered form, that time has left Of every earthly joy bereft; This hecatomb of misery Is fitting sacrifice for thee; Then spare the loved, and beautiful! Such are too frail for thy dark trust; The fairest flowers those cold hands cull When gathered are but common dust!"

He pressed his trembling lip upon
That brow so faded, yet so fair;
Then started back, as chill and wan
It met his touch, for death was there;
And, gazing with that strange, weird feeling,
We look our last on those we love;—
When each calm feature seems revealing
A presence it were vain to prove;
And wondering at that changeless cheek,
Where brightest smiles were wont to speak,
Like the sunned ripples of a wave,
The welcome love for ever gave:—
He felt, as severed hearts can only
Tell what they've known, how sad, and lonely.

Yes, there the spoiler's impress lay,
Whose charnel breath had swept away
That heavenly light, whose parted beam
Leaves the poor semblance of life's dream.
And yet how passing fair it is,

This soulless, senseless, lifeless thing, This wintered world without a spring, Mocking our very wretchedness With what we ne'er can repossess: And, oh, revolting thought! to think How soon affection's self will shrink From what we clasp so fondly still !--To know that on the honied lip The greedy worm will take his fill, And revel where a god might sip: To place within the cold, dark grave All that we sought or wished to save: To hear the dust its fellow greeting As if some muffled heart were beating; Whilst each reverberating tone Seems echoing a farewell moan, Till the heaped earth yields not a sound To tell what love lies underground. And can we deem that this will be,

Yet, with such strange security,

Trace out each line of fond endeavour As they this life would last for ever? Why do we plant our richest treasure Upon a base so frail as this, And build aloft, with affluent measure, To gain an unsubstantial bliss? Because each heaven-born predilection Ne'er with this fading outward dies; Death purifies the soul's affection, That higher still her wing may rise. Oh! were it not for that assurance Which tells an everlasting meeting, How weak would be the heart's endurance. And all its joys how dim and fleeting. "Was it for this alone?" he cried. "To see each cherished hope destroyed— That every danger has been past, And liberty achieved at last? Oh! would that on the battle plain I'd nobly perished with the slain!

Then, 'neath those sand-reared sepulchres, This aching heart had slept with theirs. Why turned aside the fatal blow When in the thickest of the fight? Death seemed a glorious, wild delight! It was not that I shunned the foe, Though life had then a thousand joys; The desert's child can never know A passing fear—he silent dies Or proudly wrests the victor's prize. Where fell the bravest there I dared— Heedless amidst the deadly strife, Scorning the life that fate has spared, But spared in vain!—for what is life? A living death since thou art not— A sky without a star or sun To light the cheerless wanderer on-A wilderness of blighting thought, Where one rude blast has overthrown Those citadels which passion reared;

Till each o'ertopping, daring height, Like heaven itself, seemed lost to sight: And, based upon the granite stone Of loving faith, no danger feared, But stood triumphantly, as though Their lofty summits ne'er would bow. And where is their eternal now? No mountain mist, before the wind, E'er left less afterward behind. Oh, I could deem it but a sleep To which the heart had been replying, And with an idle fancy weep, Were not that form before me lying, With all death's dark accessories, Forbidding such a vain surmise. Where shall I go-oh! whither fly-To shun so dark a destiny? What boundless wave, what desert shore Can refuge now this broken heart? To linger here would torture more,

Where fond remembrance would impart Familiar traces of each scene, For ever showing what has been, And ever telling what must be-Past joy, and present misery. Such an intensity of sadness Would prove a self-destroying madness, Or leave the mind an imbecile, Whose idiot smiles could but reveal The anguish which the heart would feel. In distant scenes of war, and strife, Henceforth must pass this reckless life. Farewell-oh, what a world of sorrow Lies in that word which has no morrow! For never more shall sunlight throw The shadow of a lighter woe. And, oh! to linger, day by day, With such a bitter consciousness, That, whilst life's moments pass away, The night of misery grows no less!

E'en kindred love, to which we cling
In nature's darkest suffering,
Must ever prove a helpless thing;
For human sympathy can never
Pluck out the arrow that must quiver
Whilst aught of sentient being lives,
With every pulse the pierc'd heart gives."

Then on those silent lips he pressed

A kiss, which would have broke their rest,

Nor left their fearful stillness longer

Had not the seal of death proved stronger;

And burdened with a lone despair,

Such as the lost are said to share,

He fled he knew not, recked not where.

But Arab maids are wont to tell, With lips, and eyes, that speak too well, How Hela loved, how Azim fell.

THE SLAVE.

It is the market-place; and gathered there,
The sons of freedom hold a human fair;
Where motley forms, in varied lots displayed,
Await the changing destinies of trade.
What eager zest, what envious fear is shown,
Ere the quick hammer knocks each purchase down;
For, aided by the seller's varnished tale,
Competing numbers yield a ready sale;
Till every lot in close succession past,
Leaves a young mother, and her child the last.

There stood the Creole with her boy alone,
The gaze of many, but the love of none.
Yet heedless of all scrutiny, she seemed
Like one who, with a waking semblance, dreamed;

And scornful jests, and words of loathed intent, Reached not the ear of that dark innocent: But had the outward sense received their sound. The stranger tongue no meaning would have found; For her untutored soul had never known Of any clime, or language, save her own. And now perchance, in such abstracted thought, Her absent mind revisits that loved spot; Where, long endeared by nature's holiest ties, The star of being sought no brighter skies. Unpardoned be the crime! that dared to break A peace their hoarded wealth could never make; And thou just Heaven! avenge the avarice That heaps its treasures at so dark a price. But starting from that apathy, her eye Turned with a sudden wildness on her boy; As though one moment, with maternal dread, She almost feared the sleeping child was dead: Then what a change came o'er her throbbing breast, As well assured, she watched his placid rest;

Whilst busy fancy moulds each tender limb, With every feature, counterfeits of him, That perished sire, who shed his willing blood To guard their home of mountain solitude. And as quick memory lighted up the train Of that dread past; a very thunder rain, Of burning tears, upon the sleeper fell; Who starting, met the gaze he knew so well, And nestling in her bosom like a bird, Sank back to rest, the future all uncared. But hark! amidst the busy hum is heard A voice, whose sound her inmost being stirred. When last she proved the mandate of those lips, Life had become one hopeless, dark eclipse: And now, what deeper sorrow can it show, What fresh addition to her present woe? Ah! would those cruel hands the last link burst Which bound her to a life so much accursed? It cannot be, the very thought is death! And with a moveless look, and scarce drawn breath, Whilst all her soul one fearful instinct grew, She watched each gesture till the worst she knew.

Those swarthy forms, whose hearts tho' cold and chill

As northern waters are, aghast stood still
Before that eye, which with a natural hate,
Flashed back the anguish of her bitter fate;
As if some power unseen restrained each hand,
Scorning the tyrant, and his harsh command.
"Haste, bring the knotted scourge: the flowing
blood

Methinks will help to tame her savage mood."

The cruel lash descends; she heeds it not,

Her shame, and agony are all forgot,

As with soft, soothing words, and fond caress,

She seeks to dissipate her child's distress.

Oh! would that they, who deem that darker hue

Must prove within the soul a love less true,

Could see an abdication so complete,
Where self lies prostrate under memory's feet;
Or hear the pleadings of that wistful tone,
Asking the life which Nature gave thine own.
How many a form, which boasts a fairer shade,
Might blush to witness such a love displayed.

But now man's worst is done; that mangled thing

Is all insensible to suffering;
And for some passing moments, it would seem
As though the light of life had ceased to gleam.
But no! The broken sighs, the heaving breast,
Proclaim not yet the heart has found its rest.
Trembling and dim, as troubled waters are,
Or as when misty clouds reveal a star;
From unclosed lids, the soul returning sees
The haunting shadows of her miseries;
Till with a growing knowledge of distress,
It wakens to no doubtful consciousness.

What mean those empty arms, that binding chain?

Each bleeding wound recalls the past again; And with a fitful start she looks around, But vainly listens for a well-known sound; For never more shall loving eyes behold That image which did late her heaven enfold; And never more shall eager ears receive Those accents which were all that earth could give. She kneels, the embodiment of mute despair: But tho' no outward utterance was there, Each limb and feature seemed a breathing prayer. Then, like a tigress wounded in its lair, With one wild bound of mortal agony, Shriek upon shriek ascends the burning sky. Anon, like Pythoness inspired, she stood With lips apart and rigid attitude; Whilst the strained eye assumed that stricken look, The hunted quarry in its terror took.

And now successive tremors o'er her pass,
As chilling winds creep thro' the shivering grass;
Or with convulsive action sweep her form,
Which writhes like twisted sapling in a storm.
With painful, intermittent gasps she pants:
And trailing wide, as unkempt trellis plants,
A sweeping mass of long, dishevelled hair,
With every movement floated to the air.
She looked a being not of earth nor heaven,
But such as fantasy may oft have given;
When, with eccentric thought, we idly dream,
And picture things which are not as they seem.
Then seizing on the clanking chain, she thinks
To wrench in twain those heavy blood-stained
links;

Whose serpent foldings crushed the quivering flesh,

As every struggle left some wound afresh. But vain each effort, those unyielding parts Are firm and hard, as even human hearts. Is hope, then, hopeless, is there no relief,
No chance removal of her present grief?
None, wretched mother! none, those hearts of
steel

At thy despair a pleased sensation feel;
Like those who, gazing on a listed plain,
With strange exulting, watch the conquered slain.
And how can he who bought, or he who sold,
Deem that a love like thine can equal gold?
As well suppose the ruthless hand would spare
The bleating form, and leave the shambles bare.
Death can alone thy tortured soul release;
Oh! bid it welcome, for it brings thee peace.
Again she falls—ah tyrant! can it be
That thou hast played a losing policy?
Yes, vain is each endeavour, never more
Shall mortal skill that passing life restore;
That last faint sigh proclaims her freedom won,
The happy mother has regained her son.

DEATH.

"And I looked, and behold a pale horse, and his name that sat on him was death, and hell followed after."—Rev.

I.

Weird as the snows of the ice fettered north
On a shadowy steed pale death went forth;
Having failed in heaven, he sought the earth
With his hellish crew.

2.

"To conquest, to conquest!" he proudly cried,
As the misty banners float far and wide;
Whilst famine and woe his dread cohorts ride
Victorious.

3.

"On, on to the banquet!—earth is our prey;
And the offspring of man shall curse the day
When he dashed the immortal cup away
From his erring lips.

"The cry of despair and the tear of distress
Shall herald us on to slay and oppress;
Till the children of men daintily mess,
The legions of hell."

5.

Away! with a wild and terrible cry,
Which the angels of heaven gave back with a sigh,
To the beautiful earth those foul fiends fly
With a vulture swoop.

6.

Silent, but swift, is the foot of the steed,
As they pass o'er the plain where the mighty bleed;
Swept down like the flower that decks the mead,
By the blast of war.

7.

As the roll of the thunder sweeps thro' heaven,
As the crash of the avalanche headlong riven,
As wave meets wave by the tempest driven,
So meet those foes.

Fierce is the battle and bloody the strife,
As the passions of man awake to life;
And many a mother, and many a wife,
Are widowed and reft.

9.

But the fight has ceased, and that field of blood, Where nation arrayed against nation stood, Is now calm as the desert's solitude,

10.

The sentinel guarded the city's gate,
And his iron features grew dark with hate,
As he marked the leaguering host that wait

Its overthrow.

In silence hushed.

11.

And his patriot gaze instinctive fell

On each bastioned tower and citadel;

And he thought of the home he loved so well

Without a fear.

But little he deemed of a false heart near, Till his own had buried the traitor's spear; And the cry that burst on his dying ear Is victory.

13.

For the invader's ruthless work is done,
And the city that smiled in the morning's sun,
The evening shadows are resting on
A ruined heap.

14.

With a softened voice and a soundless tread,
An anguished mother is watching that bed,
Where a young form lies like a tree that has shed
Its vernal leaves.

15.

But love is hopeful, and life's mystery
Is fathomless, like to eternity;
And the gasp that would seem its ebbing sigh
May prove its flow.

And love is changeless, and a love more true

Ne'er from the soil of humanity grew

Than that which made one the hearts of those two,

The mother and son.

17.

And love is faithful, and day after day

She ceased not to watch, she ceased not to pray;

And oft in her midnight she fancied the grey

Of a coming morn.

18.

But love, faith, and hope at the grave must bow, Yielding the all they can claim here below; And the heart of the mother, so desolate now, Is breaking alone.

19.

On a bank of roses a maiden lay,

For a dream had carried her soul away;

And she felt not the night wind's chilling play

O'er her tender form.

Yet serpent-like the cold wind was creeping
Through that gentle breast so calmly sleeping;
And the morning found the roses weeping,
But the maiden had gone.

21.

And summer had passed with its skies of blue,
And autumn had come with its changing hue,
And the fallen leaves had the pearl-like dew
For their winding sheet.

22.

Bright shone the sun, and soft zephyrs were sighing,
And again on that bank the maiden was lying;
But the roses were dead, and she, too, was dying,
As faded as they.

23.

She looked scarce of earth with that pallid cheek,
And loving hearts felt what they dared not speak;
And the chill snow fell, and the winds blew bleak,
And the maiden was not.

With a stealthy tread gaunt famine is seen,
As pale as fear, and as cruel, I ween;
And strong life bows down, like to fields of green
Before the scythe.

25.

Hark! hark! to that wild-uttered, soul-wrung prayer,

Piercing the hush of the tainted air,

As the mother clasps, with a wild despair,

Her plague-struck child.

26.

In vain are those feverish lips oft pressed

To the source of its being; that loving breast

Is itself with the germ of death possessed,

A poisoned spring.

27.

Unheeded, unwept, are beauty and birth,
Whose delicate feet with scorn pressed the earth;
And lips that claimed homage from manhood and
worth

Are pleading in vain.

Desolate rears each temple and tower,
Where late was throned imperial power;
The sceptre unclaimed, untouched the dower,
Of centuries.

29.

But where are they? The haught monarch that swayed,

The noble in glittering pomp arrayed,

The warrior's sword, and the peasant's spade

Lie side by side.

30.

Still Death knows no surfeit; triumphing on, The wilds of the north, and the climes of the zone, Alike to the sway of his power bow down,

A helpless prey.

31.

And he came where the bigot's flame reared high,

For a martyr stood at the stake to die;

Yet his dauntless mien, and radiant eye,

Spake not of fear.

Higher and higher the red flames arise; But amidst those terrible agonies, With a faith unshaken, his spirit cries, "Where is thy sting?"

33.

When hark! the loud blast of a trumpet fell,
Echoed by earth and re-echoed by hell;
And the trembling conqueror knew 'twas the knell
Of his glory.

34.

Louder and louder bursts every peal,
Till the staggering hills like drunkards reel,
Whilst the heaving ocean and earth reveal
Their long-kept dead.

35.

Tho' a thousand suns should circle the sky,
And flash their meridian rays from high,
How dim were their mingled radiancy
To a child of light.

Then, oh! who can tell, or what can compare
To the glory that lit the burning air
When a myriad seraphs gathered there
To judgment?

37.

Like the dashing waves on a rocky coast,

Ere the western glow is in twilight lost,

Each motioned wing from its pinions tossed

A flood of fire.

38.

The wondering heavens roll back with fear,

And the troubled stars are hurled from their sphere,

Like the leaves of a tree, when yellow and sere

By the winter's blast.

39.

Those children of darkness a moment stood,
And the shattered wreck of creation viewed;
Then onward fled, with terror pursued,
To the realms of night.

Whilst the hallowed dead, from their dust arisen,
See earth renewed like another heaven;
And a thousand years of bondage given
To death, and hell.



SOCIETY.

ī.

How common is the clay,

Tho' stampt with Heaven's impress,

Unless some artificial ray

This human nature bless.

2.

It is not what we are,
But simply what we have;
Gold lustres life's first morning star,
And consecrates its grave.

3.

And men of pigmy frame,
Stript of successful chance,
Stand forward with a giant claim,
The gods of circumstance.

Whilst crowned with richest dower
That Heaven itself could grant,
If nourished by no Dânaè shower,
The soul would pine in want.

5.

For Scribe, and Pharisee,
Are no extinguished brood,
And wealth has still her Galilee,
Whose Nazareth yields no good.

6.

Oh, ye who bear the heat
And burden of the day;
Who path the tread of gilded feet,
Life's unassessed highway!

7.

The curse gave no such doom

To toil with want oppressed

This living darkness of the tomb,

Without its wished-for rest;

To be a mindless thing,

Fixed in one destined groove,

Like puppets on a juggler's string,

For selfish hands to move.

9.
Then leave the dull, low round
Of poverty's gaunt thrall,
And look at man from vantage ground,
The standard of the fall.

The meanest birthright shares;
Nor leave this everlasting night
To heritage your heirs.

Cast off the gross delight
Of each abnormal sense;
Nor let acquired appetite
Involve a false expense.

Repress with iron rule

This tyranny of self;

The discipline of such a school

Would prove a moral wealth.

The holiest ties of life

May bear no honoured names;

Reckless improvidence—a wife

And children—parish claims.

The highest still the higher;
And shall the lowest lose the prize
By clinging to the mire?

The touch of skilful hand
Should lead to better thought:
Divinity itself has planned
Where honest workers wrought.

There is a God-like grace
Which labour cannot foil;
There is a native manliness
Which nobles even toil.

17.

Yes, tho' the brow may reek,

And the outward form look mean,

The cloud will show some sunlit streak

To prove the heaven within.

18.

A difference of degrees

All social bonds must claim;

And such, like wine, will have their lees,

Yet still they are the same.

19.

With one self-being rife,
Which, with Promethean fire,
Illuminates successive life,
And leaves a common pyre.

It is this intricate,
Indissoluble tie
That, blending with all human fate,
Reveals one sympathy.

21.

And he who wakes its chord
With harsh discordant tone;
Be he a peasant, or a lord,
Will feel the pang his own.

22.

Heed not the carping tongue
Of hired delegate;
'Tis his, by prating fancied wrong,
To live in pampered state.

23.

The internecine war,

Which wealth, and labour wage,

Will leave behind some after-jar

No peace shall e'er assuage.

Then strive not man with man— Work hand in hand together; And, whether in the rear or van, Dare onwards, upwards ever.

25.

To grasp an empty gain—

The triumph of an hour—

The race that burst the Nubian's chain

Are slaves to fashion's power.

26.

And they, who'd fearless spill
The chivalry of blood,
To curb some foreign despot's will,
Are by themselves subdued.

27.

With ever bended knee,

Before this worshipped shrine;

Behold thy children, liberty!

In mystic fetters pine.

Each thought, and impulse given,
Obedient to its sway;
Till man's rich heritage of heaven
Is bartered thus away.

29.

On roll the soul-stained wheels, Crushing each bursting heart; And every shricking victim feels He's acting well his part.

30.

Whilst friendship proves a name,

A bubble light as air;

And love—oh! where's the immortal flame?

Life's desert echoes, Where?

31.

For hearts by nature made,

One being to create,

In scale of policy are weighed,

And with convenience mate.

Oh, Thou! Who first didst raise
This masterpiece of thine;
So wondrous fair that e'en Thy gaze
Approved the work divine.

33.

It could not be decreed
By Thy eternal will,
That one ancestral fault should lead
To such progressive ill.

34.

No; man has left the path
Which nature made his own;
And all the wretchedness he hath
Springs from a seed self sown.

35.

Why do the noblest sink

Beneath the unequal strife,

And, standing on dark misery's brink,

Curse this fictitious life?

Because they cannot cringe,
And flatter, fawn, and bend,
And every higher law infringe
To gain a worthless end.

37.

In character, as trade,
Appearances succeed;
And he who makes the most parade
Will take the golden meed.

38.

And thus the empty boast,

With all its lying race,

Shall claim what struggling honour lost,

And win approving grace.

39.

Whilst subtilties of mien,
And euphemisms nice,
Give their false gloss to every sin,
And sanction every vice.

Till like some web of old,
Which unskilled hands have made,
Blending in colours manifold,
Each feature, form, and shade;

41.

So does the social phase,

Commingling every dye,

Present an all bewildering maze

Of moral tapestry.

42.

Oh, where's the man, whose mind

To nobler action wrought,

Would prove himself what Heaven designed,

The gold her blood has bought?

43.

Who, with a self-taught might,
Would burst each false control,
Scorning the harlot that would plight
The sinews of the soul.

Whose heart knows well how dear Are those too clinging ties, Whose severed tendrils sickly rear 'Neath even brighter skies.

45.

Yet fearlessly resigns
What second nature made,
Should dark misfortune mar the lines
In pleasant places laid.

46.

Who'd rather exiled live
In some far spot of earth;
Than every social gain achieve,
With loss of moral worth.

THE SUICIDE.

I.

He stood upon the river's brink;
And with a strange wild eye,
He watched the waters rise and sink,
As each joyous wave swept by;
And he felt that life had no loving link,
In its chain of misery.

2.

He'd struggled for some social gain,

As thousands battle still;
But seldom eager hands obtain,
Without a reckless skill;
Success comes down like to thunder rain,
And few achieve their will.

But having faltered in the fight

He fell, and could not rise;

And as success is ever right,

Who heeds where honour lies;

The pæans to him who, with daring might,

Has won the wished for prize.

4.

And oft his morbid spirit sighed

Far from the beaten way,

Beyond the flow of passion's tide,

To pass life's sands away:

And with such a fate he, perchance, had died

In nature's own decay.

5.

But a social despot ever rose

To stay his liberty:

And, with the Laocoon's wild throes, Hope struggled to be free:

But the bonds of circumstance round him close And still a slave is he.

And whilst with heart oppressed with woe,
He gazed upon the river,
There rose a music from its flow,
Which murmured peace for ever:
And he longed with a wild desire to go
Where grief no more could wither.

7.

And as the bright stream swept along
With an ever restless wave,
He listened to its siren song,
That spake not of the grave:
And he thought of the world's unceasing wrong,
Which, living, he must brave.

8.

And he heard its cold, unfeeling laugh,

Till his sensitive spirit shrank;

Whilst the waters seemed so sweet to quaff,

As they rippled against the bank:

And what recked he of eternal wrath?—

The future might prove a blank.

Then there came a sickness o'er his soul;
It felt like a living death;
And through each sense a terror stole,
Until he gasped for breath:
Whilst fast from his brow the large drops roll,

And splash in the flood beneath.

10.

And when the conflict passed away,

It left such horror there;

What mortal lip shall ever say

The depth of that despair:

And oft in his anguish he tried to pray,

But he could not say a prayer.

11.

Then the tempter came, like a summer's dream,
And every fear beguiled;
And the sunlight glinted o'er the stream,
Till the answering waters smiled;
And the play of their billows looked to him,
Like the gambols of a child.

T 2.

On, onwards dashing, with a flow
Of wild delirious glee;
What could that glorious river know
Of human misery?

The very pebbles seemed dancing below, And the grass waved joyously.

13.

Another step, and all is o'er;
For the tide is strong and deep;
And mortal strength must fail before
Its ever onward sweep:

One gasping struggle—and never more Would waken life's long last sleep.

14.

But time past on, and left him there
With that blighted soul alone;
He heeded not the noontide glare,
Or when the sun went down:
And the stars came through the evening air,
And in that dark stream shone.

But who shall tell the thoughts that past
Across his maddened brain;
Or how he clung to life at last,
Whilst hope could aught retain:
For that cry which burst on the midnight blast,
Shall never be heard again.

16.

And when the light of morning came,

The river was flowing still;

Its sunny billows seemed the same,

As though they knew no ill;

But the life they've quenched had a living flame

Which those waters cannot kill.

TO A GATHERED WILD FLOWER.

I.

Thou beautiful flower!

The proudest of earth

May boast of their birth,

But thy simple dower

Exceeds all such worth.

2.

What monarch has pleasures
With thine to compare?
The sun, earth, and air
Have lavished their treasures
To make thee so fair.

Whilst gazing upon thee,
All care is beguiled,
And this heart beats so wild;
For thy beauties have won me
The joys of a child.

4.

Yet like to thy beauty,

These pleasures decay,

They soon pass away;

And the world's hated duty

Again holds its sway.

5.

Oh! why did I gather—
The heart's selfish sorrow,
Forgetting thy morrow:
That form from the heather,
Whose shade thou didst borrow?

E'en now, thou art fading
Like stars in the sun;
And those tints, one by one,
As they die, seem upbraiding
The deed I have done.

7.

The bee, who each morning,

Hums over the heath,

For thy lips' honied breath;

To-morrow returning,

Shall kiss thee in death.

8.

The insect, far roaming,

Whose home is thy cell;

When she leaves the wild dell,

Ere the shades of the gloaming,

Night's coming shall tell:

That fairy like pinion,
Now winging the air,
All heedless of care,
Will find its dominion
A wreck of despair.

10.

The sun, no more blessing,
Shall light on thy brow;
Whilst the zephyrs that blow,
Once gently caressing,
Shall wither thee now.

LI.

And when the long even,
With soft fading light,
Shall melt into night;
The rich dews of heaven
Will fall but to blight.

'Twere vain to deplore thee!

For grief can't rebring

So lovely a thing;

Or soon I'd restore thee,

Fair child of the spring.

13.

Yet I cannot forget thee!

For in this fond heart,

There's a womanly part

That still will regret thee,

When faded thou art.

14.

Farewell then! I leave thee
To die on that breast,
Which hath loved thee the best;
And sweet flower, believe me,
I envy thy rest.

INFLUENCE.

I.

Wearied with his play, A delicate boy looked from the fading earth; And watched the stars, as struggling into birth, They paved God's way.

2.

Desolate and lonely, He traced that wondrous infinite of blue; But tho' unnumbered worlds were shining through, He sought one only.

Tremulous it came From heaven's extremest, like a fire fly; Yet shadowing forth what might, and mystery, In that small flame.

But, whence was given
That isolating will, which fixed his gaze
On that sole star, whose scarce distinguished blaze
Seemed all his heaven?

5.

The reason soon is said:

His mother loved that star, and she was wont

To say its beams lighted his young life's fount;

And she was dead.

6.

Yes, she had passed away;
But in his soul, for evil, or for good,
That simple faith, unchangeable, had stood
A living ray.

7.

He was a child of thought:

And in the fulness of his own rich heart,

There was a life of being all apart,

Which fancy wrought.

And in this life he lived:

And when to others he impassive seemed;

They little knew of what his spirit dreamed,

Or what believed.

9.

Oh! in that outer world
Of iron impulses, how many are
Who, like to him, have some ideal star,
Where faith lies furled.

10.

But since they cannot bow Before the dull material of life; And in the attrition of social strife,

A oneness show:

II.

Like to a wayward child,

That world they know not, and which knows not them,

Would all their self imaginings contemn
As visions wild.

But there will come an hour;
Tho' promise long delay with triumph clad;
When the grown seed shall make the proud heart glad,

With harvest's flower.

r3.

Yes, souls of better worth!

The seeds of living thought still scatter wide;

Tho' prejudice, the early germ may hide,

They'll have their birth.

14.

But, look at that fair boy!

There is a whiter marble on his cheek,

Yet on the lips a smile, which seems to speak

Some inward joy.

15.

What can his young soul tell

Beyond the furthest stretch of mortal might,

That thus she fixes there her eager sight,

Immoveable?

From the horizon's bed,

Where heaven and earth seemed greeting, a small cloud

Emerges, shaped like a funeral shroud, Which onwards spread.

17.

And now, beneath its sweep,

The infinity of heaven has passed away;

And on the cold, dark ground, that pale form lay

Like one asleep.

т8.

Life's dream is over!

The guest-chamber hath lost its no more guest;
Whilst looking on that star, he sighed for rest,
And found his mother.

LIFE: AN EXTRACT.

I.

What is this being we call existence?—
A mixture of the Godhead, and the worm,
Of heaven's ethereal, and earth's dull sense;
Such inconsistencies man's nature form.
Our passions and affections, gather warm
Around the dust, which every hour may
fling
Impalpable before the passing storm;
Yet still we love no less, but rather cling
With a more close embrace this fair, but fading thing.

We know this little present is our all,

The sole assurance midst eternal space;

For when the ebbing sands their last shall fall,

What future home will yield the heart a place?

The spirit will the spiritual embrace,

And the soul triumph in her vast emprise;

But passion ne'er will own the once-loved face,

For all these fond, endeared humanities,

Must perish with the source from whence they
had their rise.

3.

But take away the idol, break the glass
Which mirrors back our sympathies—and lo!
Those bonds, which seemed our heaven to encompass,

Are wasted by the spirit's overflow:

Before the storm the stricken heart will bow, And mourn her hopes which, like some vessel's . wake,

Have left a pathless present, but the blow Which crushes the affections, shall awake A thirst within the soul, earth's pleasures cannot slake.

4.

We feel an insufficiency—a void
The whole of time can never satiate;
The visions of the past are all destroyed,
And desolation grows more desolate,
Till steeped in bitterness we wail our fate;
Or hovering o'er the cold, insensate pyre,
Seek out some fresh ignition to create;
But 'twere as well to tune a stringless lyre,
As from those embers wake the once extinguished fire.

Yet is there then no saving influence,
No other centre, where the severed soul
May find revealed some fresh circumference,
Whose limits shall present a surer goal?
Go, ask the martyr, when the red fires roll
Their scorching shroud around his dying
frame!

That heaven-lit smile no tortures can control, Whose sunny brightness dims the bigot's flame,

Shall tell thee of a hope he would, but cannot name.

6.

Oh Christian! what a glorious faith is thine! The natural heart knows not, cannot feel Those spiritual impulses divine, Which can, with such convincing proof reveal So bright a future, that the deadly steel,
Or blazing fagot, are as impotent
As is the heritage of earthly weal,
Or those fond ties with Nature's being blent,
To wean the purpose of thy soul's once fixed intent.

7.

The world in pity, or in scorn, may deem
The immolation of that self which they
Have throned—a mere inconsequential dream,
More visionary than that earthly ray
Which leads the wandering step but more astray;
But can their gilded joys with thine compare?
Whence is to-morrow's hope?—or if to-day,
This little day of life is all their share:
The bubble soon shall burst, and leave them what,
and where?

THE MANIAC.

I.

Within a lonely cell,

A sleeping maniac lay;

And thro' his prison-bars there fell,

A beam of parting day.

2.

And o'er his blighted form

It shed a passing light;

Would it could pierce the inward storm,

And dissipate that night.

3.
Upon his forehead hung
The thick and matted hair;
Like tangled harp-strings when unstrung,
It lay untended there.

Around each giant limb,

A band of iron creased;

And thus they thought to conquer him,

As though he were a beast.

5.
He sees no living thing;
He hears no human voice;
Save when his pampered menials bring

6.
And then some hasty blow,
Awakes him to his food;
And this is all that he can know,
Beyond his solitude.

The refuse of their choice.

7.
E'en reason's self might rave,
Maddened by such a fate;
To be thus fettered like a slave,
A thing of fear, and hate.

But, oh! it cannot be
That yonder loathsome clay,
Was laughing on some mother's knee—
The child of yesterday.

9.

When thro' the mist of years,

Her loving heart went forth;

And hope prevailed o'er woman's fears,

And gave thee fame, and worth.

10.

How could affection guess

So terrible a thought,

That such an abject wretchedness,

Would prove thy present lot?

TI.

Unconscious as a child,

He lay in tranquil sleep;

And ever and anon he smiled,

As tho' he'd nought to weep.

He dreams, perchance, of home,
Of boyhood's joyous bliss;
How little did he think 'twould come
To such a change as this.

13.

Sleep on, nor ever wake;

For dark must be thy morrow;

'Twere better thus life's thread should break,

And end in dreams thy sorrow.

THE DEE: LLANGOLLEN.

ı.

Thou glorious river! with what strange delight
I trace again the margin of thy shore;
And listen to the music of thy flight,
As thro' the serried rocks the waters pour.

2.

How beautiful and changeless thou dost seem!

Thy sparkling waves dash on as, when a boy,

They burst upon the sense like some bright dream,

Leaving a passionate excess of joy.

3.

They bring again that now forgotten past,
When life appeared an endless summer prime;
When youth believed the present hour would last,
And all the future showed no darker time.

Would that life's real semblanced thee, bright river!
So richly prodigal its onward path;
But, one by one, we watch each channel wither,
'Till nought but barren memories it hath.

5.

And midst the drought of feeling there we lie,
And long, with parched lips, to taste that wave
Whose floods of love gave back the morning sky,
And mirrored sunbeams o'er their present grave.

6.

Oh! were it not for that we cannot know,

But yet with an undying faith believe,

We should not linger for this less'ning flow,

But part with being ere the waters leave.

7•

Those life-like waves shall prove a coming dearth;
Their joyous melody an endless sleep;
Whilst o'er thy wreck, in channels not of earth,
The soul's full stream shall ever onwards sweep.

THE CONWAY: VALE OF LLANRWST.

Τ.

A child of earth was standing Upon a wood-crowned height; And from its lofty landing, Beheld so fair a sight.

2.

It was a changeful river, That traced a sunny plain; And went, it scarce knew whither, With its winding silver train.

Now lost in rocky dingle The shaded water lies; Then breaking o'er the shingle, The blue of bluest skies.

. 4.

Now calm, and gently stealing, No ripple on its breast; Then in torrents wild revealing, The waking of its rest.

5.

Whilst endless variations,
Of sweet enchanting sound,
With musical pulsations,
Went floating all around.

6.

As intonations, deeper,
In diapasons rise;
Or soft, like some fair sleeper,
Whose breath goes forth in sighs.

7.

Retreating, and advancing,

With a joyous ebb, and flow;

'Till the fresh green leaves went dancing

On many a waving bough.

And a thousand birds were singing,
As birds in May can sing:
Whilst the cuckoo's note came ringing
The advent of the spring.

9.

And a myriad insect-voicings,
In a dazzling fairy maze,
Swelled that chorus of rejoicings,
As they murmured insect praise.

10.

It was a gladsome hearing,

The song of bird, and wave;

As the breeze came by careering,

With the melody they gave.

11.

And 'twas a grand beholding,

Those everlasting hills;

Whose vast, and God-like moulding,

The wide horizon fills.

Oh, Nature! varied Nature!

Thy charms can never cloy;
In every mood and feature,

There is a living joy.

13.

And since by man's sin shaded,
Thou art so passing fair;
Oh! how shall thought, unaided,
That coming time declare?

14.

When crowned, with wondrous splendour,
Thy King shall tread those skies;
And death, and hell, surrender
The grasp of centuries.

15.

When, by the Spirit lighted,
The waiting dead shall rise,
And severed hearts united,
Heaven's presence realize.

Who would not take life's burden,
With all its cares, and fears,
To win so bright a guerdon,
To live those thousand years?

CONTENTMENT.

How often in the world we find Some false persuasion rules mankind, Which, like an heirloom handed down From each succeeding sire to son, Becomes an all acknowledged fact, Which reason cannot counteract. Thus sages proved, and preachers own, Contentment lies with man alone, And say the tub and acorn give Sufficiency for all to live: 'Tis argued well if, like the beast, Man wants no more—"enough's a feast." But has he not an appetite Which worldly power can ne'er requite— A ceaseless longing after what Earth cannot grant, for earth hath not?

What is content?—what will shall trace A certain limit to its space, And say, So far, nor farther, move? Who shall point out ambition's way, And by the Word eternal prove When man may climb, and when delay? Go, ask the restless race, and find What different reasons sway mankind-How truth, derived from Holy Writ, Is made each wide resolve to fit: From one plain fact, deductions given As varied as the hues of heaven: Their thoughts, like form and feature, tending, No two in one conjunction blending. As well suppose the Alpine bird Would in her notes of joyance sing, And fondle o'er the hand that dared To stay the freedom of her wing; As man in happiness retain This badge of sin, this mortal chain

Which binds, with serpent-like control, Each freer impulse of the soul;
And with its earthly sway bows down
The will he vainly deems his own;—
Yes, vainly deems, for vain the boast—
His fall beheld the treasure lost;
And now the castaway of Heaven,
An unseen faith his only haven,
Whose promises allure him on
To claim that bright, immortal crown
Which Adam lost, which Calvary won.

THE SOLDIER'S FUNERAL.

Ι.

With the tread of solemn feet,

They bore the warrior's shroud,

Where labour's dark retreat

With busy life rang loud;

But, as they passed, a hush complete

Came o'er the restless crowd.

2.

The accoutrements of war

Lay on the mantled bier,

And reason, sighing, saw

Man's consummation here;

Which, like the falling of a star,

Blazes to disappear.

No martial clang was there;
But, like a wild bird's note,
That soft, and thrilling air
Around the soul would float;
Till the throbbing heart began to stir
As though some friend were not.

4.

And the beat of the muffled drum
Would ever, and anon,
With its bell-like music come,
When each gentler sound had gone;
But soon it died in a distant hum,
And left the heart alone.

5.

Not blazonry of fame

This change of feeling wrought;

Unknown alike his name,

Or victories he had fought;

No, it was but a human claim,

Which waked a human thought.

A CATECHISM.

J.

What is life?

Time's short, uncertain lease;

To-day a scene of endless strife,

To-morrow all is peace.

2.

What is love?

Passion's embodiment—

The soul, and sense, together wove,

In one wild being blent.

3.

What is joy?

A vision of the mind,

Which, once possessed, begins to cloy;

The sting is all we find.

What is fear?

A presence dark, and lonely; Most palpable when none is near Save God, and nature only.

5.

What is hope?

A promise faith has given;
Like sunbeams, when the dark clouds ope,
It smiles on earth from heaven.

6.

What is death?

The checkmate of life's game;

One gasp, and then this little breath

Returns from whence it came.

THE OLD YEAR.

With a pulse-like beat,

The iron hand moves o'er the dial's sphere;

And soon the numbered minutes will complete

Another passing year.

Hark! the hour strikes; and time, now past, is—where?

One, by one, ringing through the morning air,
The intonations of that deep-toned bell,
In the eternal ocean slowly fell;
And on the bosom of its restless swell,
Each circlet motion quickly sweeps away,
And now, that year is but a yesterday.

It is a common saying, "The old year."

But yet there is a something in the sound,
Which falls not echoless upon the ear;

Its very mention brings a byegone round

Of long-forgotten memories back again; And, as we gaze through life's dim window pane, How many pasts we trace which gave no fruit:

But like the Prophet's gourd too quickly grew, And in the night, the world's worm nipt their root.

Yet some, how fondly would the mind renew! For there are memories which no time can quell, And there are loving eyes, whose watches fell Like starlights, on a troubled sea at night, Which, when the storm has past, give purer light; And there's a love which ever brighter beamed, When others proved not what they truly seemed.

Farewell, thou unit of the infinite!

Thy little sand has run its earthly race:

No computation now can trace thy flight,

To human nature dark and shadowless;

So turning to his present, man makes out

From future space, another year of doubt.

HOPÉ AND DESPAIR.

I.

As on a dark and stormy day,
Some cloud is by the tempest riven;
Through broken mists the sunbeams stray,
Making a golden path to heaven:
So hope's eternal rays illume,
When all is desolate and dreary,
To point a haven midst the gloom,
A place of refuge for the weary.

2.

But yet there are some finer feelings,
Which human woes so deeply shroud;
That even hope has no revealings,
To pierce the night of such a cloud.

And with unsocial steps, and lonely,

They pace the pilgrimage of earth;

Unknown, those virtues which were only,

Wanting this light to prove their worth.

3.

With brave resolve, and noble daring,

The soul may will some high endeavour;
But oh! it is this ceaseless wearing,

This nought of sunshine in life's weather,
That with a helpless stupefaction,

Subjects all thought to its control;
Or, rouses to untutored action,

The morbid passions of the soul.

OH! SWEEP NOT WITH A HEED-LESS HAND.

I.

Oh! sweep not with a heedless hand The poet's heart-strung lyre; Thy gentler touches may command Its ever wakeful choir.

2.

For like that harp which yields its tone
To Nature's softest sigh;
It has a music of its own,
For every sympathy.

3.

A smile, a glance, an angry word,
Which some fond lips have spoken;
Oh! these can thrill each living chord,
By such they have been broken.

Life's fiercest passions o'er it driven,
A thrilling strain may move;
But all its melody is given,
When played upon by love.

Yet 'neath the world's unfeeling touch,
What harsher discords flow;
The only tones it yields to such,
Are misery, and woe.

6.

Then sweep not with a heedless hand
The poet's heart-strung lyre;
Each gentler impulse may command
Its ever wakeful choir.

TO ____

J.

And canst thou doubt this heart?

Oh! would that thou couldst see,

What constant memories there impart,

Thee, only thee.

2.

And wouldst thou search its deeps?

The task were quickly done;

One image in its waters sleeps,—

One, only one.

3.
Reflected in its wave,
Each margin flower may shine;
But never yet two heavens it gave,—
It gives but thine.

But whence, and why this fear? Thou canst not doubt yet, love; Affection hath a faith sincere, Which nought can move.

Then banish from that heart, Suspicion's fatal bane; Believe a love, so oft confessed, Nor doubt again.

THE EXCHANGE.

1.

Is this the once-loved solitude?

How desolate and drear

Those voices which ne'er vainly wooed,

Now meet the listless ear;

Oh! tell me whence this altered mood,

For Nature still is here?

2.

'Tis true the spring has past away,
And summer time has fled,
And autumn's bright but fading ray,
Is o'er the woodlands shed;
Whilst flowers that bloomed in early May,
Are sleeping with the dead.

But this has been, and still will be;
Nor would the heart deplore
That ever rich variety,
Which makes us love the more;
But there's a change come over me
I never felt before.

4.

Spirit of Nature! tell thy child—
Him, who so oft has sought
The sunny glen, the mountain wild,
With a delight, which thought
That world, whose hopes on others smiled,
Was but a thing of nought.

5.

Whence is it I no longer feel
That peaceful consciousness,
Around the wearied spirit steal,
Making each sorrow less:
Thou knowest that I love thee still,
More than that world's caress?

Its Circean cup so fondly quaffed,
And deemed with joy replete;
I've tasted oft the honied draught,
But never found a sweet;
The very brim, that sparkling laughed,
No answering smile would greet.

7.

And when by duty harshly driven,
I left thy gentle breast;
How welcome was that day in seven,
Which made existence blest:
And oft I praised the God of heaven,
Who gave so sweet a rest.

8.

Then sad and weary, leave me not
This loneliness of sorrow;
Give me that peace wealth never bought,
Nor birth could ever borrow;
And life's eclipse shall be forgot,
In such a glorious morrow.

"Mortal!" the Spirit thus replied, "Seek out some other shrine: Within that heart a warmer tide Must mingle hence with mine; The mountains are no fitting bride For passions such as thine.

"Whilst the affections slept, 'twas here Thy spirit could repair; And shunning all the world holds dear, These solitudes prefer: And I have stayed the gushing tear, And calmed the soul's despair.

II.

"But now, though not more cold to me, Yet I to thee am cold: And where there is no sympathy, The soul's cling cannot hold: Love hath but one supremacy, And heart must heart enfold."

"Yon sun—whose bright Promethean blaze
Is Nature's sovereign mover;
The wind—whose wild, mysterious ways
Man vainly would discover;
The moon—and those unnumbered rays
Which round the dark earth hover;

13.

"The sylvan stream, the rocky dell;
Yon sea—whose waters move
With a ne'er ending, restless swell,
As o'er this breast they rove:
With these my spirit seeks to dwell,—
Such only can I love.

14.

"Still the soul's homage I'll receive,
And bring thee peace again;
But hence, that heart's affection give
Where, like the summer's rain,
Through life's dark winter it shall leave
A hope not sown in vain."

THE CHANGE.

It was a Christmas scene, and faces glad,
And to all outward look from care released,
Had gathered round a festive table, clad
With all the bright accessions of a feast.
Each guest is seated—lo! an empty chair
Awaits the form of one no longer there.
Ah! never did enchanter, with the wave
Of necromantic, and mysterious wand,
In time so brief such fearful change command:
Where stood a feast, appeared a lonely grave.

STANZAS.

i.

Oh! softer by far

Was the light of that eye,

Than the fairest star

That glitters on high.

2.

Though it flashed not the blaze
Of the lightning's glare,
Yet the melting rays
Of the dove were there.

3.
I have seen it flow—
And the dew so clear
On the mountain's brow,
Was dim to its tear.

I have watched it beam
At the throne of prayer,
And methought a gleam
From heaven was there.

5.

I have seen it glow
With the heart's pure gladness,
And I think of it now
With an untold sadness.

6.

For death on the blast

Of the storm swept by;

And the brightness has past

From that dear loving eye.

7.

Yet, again it shall light
In a sky more pure,
Where storm ne'er shall blight,
Nor dark mist obscure.

8.
And as nightly I gaze
On you orbs as they shine;
Their heaven-lit rays
Shall picture me thine.



RESIGNATION.

1.

Oh! who can tell the lone despair

That steals upon the spirit's sense?

When lost is all we deemed so fair,

And life can claim no recompense.

2.

For when we seek the world that's been,
Both man and nature mock our grief;
And looking to the world within,
The flooded wastes give no relief.

3.

Then turning to a world above,

The rising waters backward flow;

And, like the patriarchal dove,

The spirit finds a rest below.

Yet, still the conflict oft renewed; 'Tis hers to keep a watchful guard,'And never falter in the feud,
Tho' sorrow presses quick and hard.

5.

And when the direst strain is past,
With an indomitable will,
The broken heart can smile at last,
And brave the pain it cannot still.

THE END.

. .





